

*Lenin, Stalin, Bacon: Animal Farm Arrives at ACTF*

Nick Pearce

On the surface, you could dismiss George Orwell's 1945 novel *Animal Farm* as simply as a book on why communism is bad, as told by farm animals. In fact, that is the face value it's taken at by many. Going hand in hand with this assumption is another notion you could conceive; namely that with the fall of communism at the end of the Cold War, the relevancy of the piece is outdated, fading, and redundant.

Jack Zerbe, the director and adapter of *Animal Farm*, disagrees, "It is extraordinarily relevant to America's current political debates, in which we're examining income inequality, immigration, race, integrity, and leadership". Looking at the production from this angle gives the content not only renewed relevancy and depth, but also brings out a concept that most wouldn't immediately name.

"Regressive Ideology" is a term from Marxism that Zerbe uses to label this concept, which he defines as "a socially transmitted belief system that actually [keeps] people from seeing and understanding the circumstances in which they live. This kind of ideology programs a people to accept their condition as inevitable and just when, in actuality, it is changeable." Basically, a socio-political equivalent of Stockholm syndrome.

In its current adaptation, the show is no simple metaphor about Marx. It's a multi-faceted performance about power, human nature, and the primal and near animalistic urges that make us human. These themes and more will be available for view and discussion at the Normandale Black Box Theatre, on Thursday(1/21) at 7 and 9:30, and Friday(1/22) at 9, 11:30,

2, and 4:30. And this coming festival, we'll likely see that all shows are equal, but some are more equal than others.